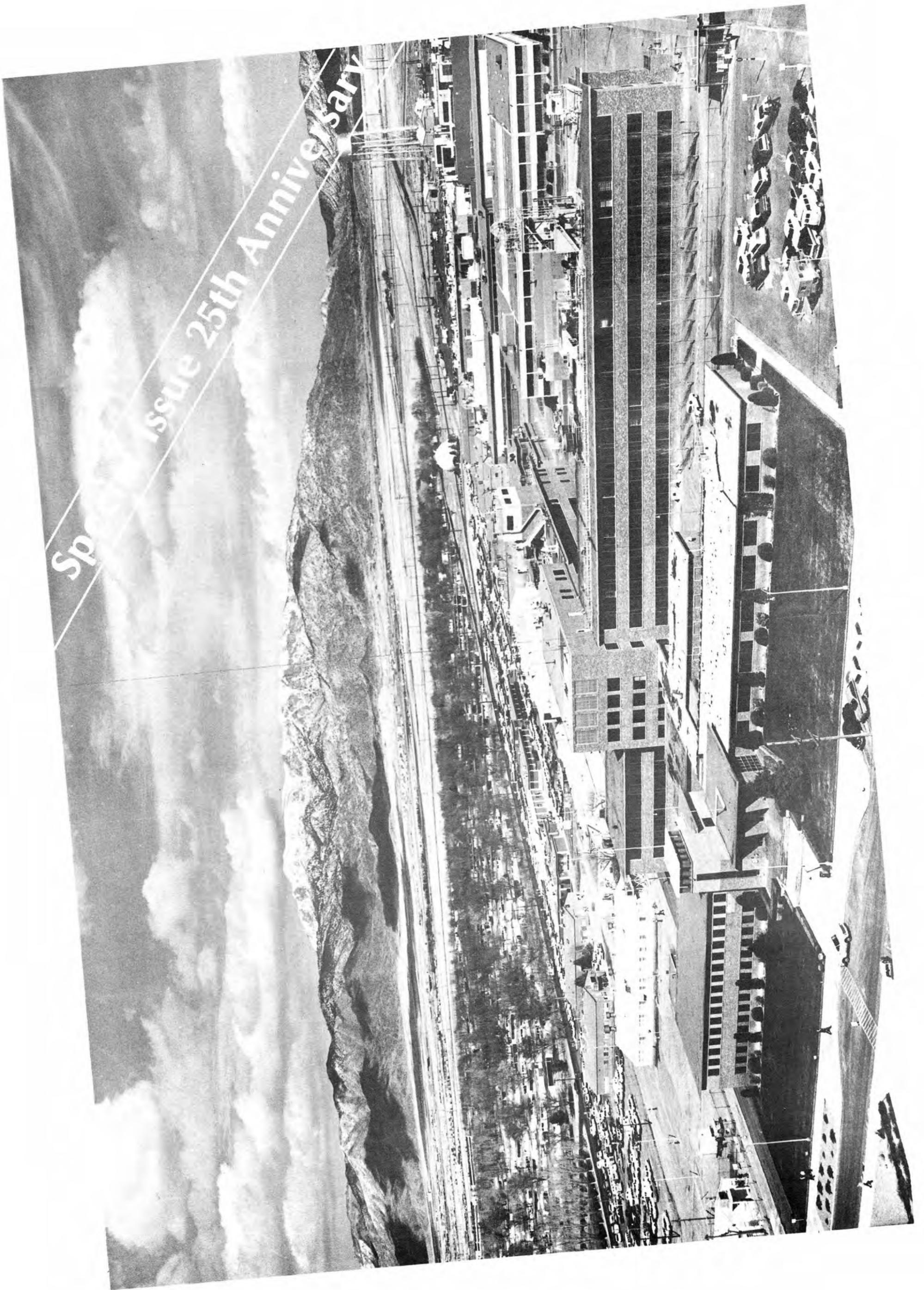


Special Issue 25th Anniversary



LAB NEWS

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL ISSUE

November 1, 1974 Sandia Laboratories — Western Electric Co.

Labs, Bell System Mark 25th Anniversary

The NEW YORK TIMES noted the event in a short item which began: "WASHINGTON, July 12 (AP) — The Atomic Energy Commission announced today the Western Electric Company and the Bell Telephone Laboratories will take over operation of its Sandia Laboratory at Albuquerque, N.M. to conduct atomic weapon research and production."

The year was 1949. Four years earlier a slim offshoot of Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, named "Z Division" after its head Dr. Jerrold Zacharias, had set up shop at what was then called Oxnard Field — later to be called Sandia Base. LASL's fabled Robert Oppenheimer had given Z Division its marching orders: to assemble a stockpile of atomic bombs and to design new weapons in cooperation with the X (Explosives) and G (Gadget) Divisions of Los Alamos. The work was done at Sandia Base rather than at Los Alamos because of the Base's proximity to an airfield. Much weapon development work, then as now, involved use of military aircraft.

The tense international situation in the late '40's was probably the root cause of Sandia's quick growth: the nation needed a stockpile of nuclear weapons. The Laboratory (as it was then called) expanded in four years from a handful of people in '45 to over 1700 by late '49. From its early form, described in one source as "... hardly impressive to the eye . . . it consisted of a dozen ramshackle wooden buildings constructed early in World War II for an air depot training station," the physical plant, by 1949, included many new permanent buildings — 800, 804, 840, 860, and 894, to name a few. And total annual disbursements were a respectable \$61 million.

The growth and the obviously permanent nature of the activity at Sandia were a matter of concern to the Regents Committee of the University of California, who were (and are) the overseers of the Los Alamos Lab. In late 1948, the Committee stated to AEC that the Sandia work of production, stockpiling, and surveillance were not appropriate for University management and asked AEC to "move toward the transfer" of Sandia to other hands by July 1949.

Thus began the search for a contractor who could and would undertake the singular task of running Sandia. The General Advisory Committee of AEC was much more impressed with the capabilities of the Bell System than with those of the several other organizations under consideration. AEC Chairman Lilienthal discussed the Committee's strong preference for Bell with President Truman who was sufficiently moved to dispatch the letter shown at right to AT&T President Leroy Wilson.

A close reading of documents written at the time by the interested parties suggests that the Bell System was not entirely enthusiastic about taking over Sandia but, in any event, acceded to the President's request. On Oct. 4,

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 13, 1949

Dear Mr. Wilson:

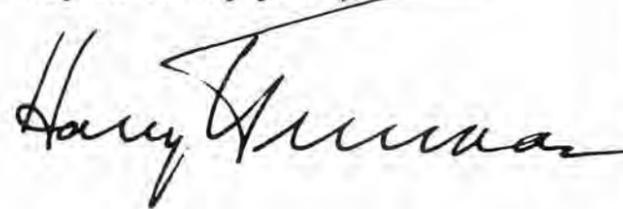
I am informed that the Atomic Energy Commission intends to ask that the Bell Telephone Laboratories accept under contract the direction of the Sandia Laboratory at Albuquerque, New Mexico.

This operation, which is a vital segment of the atomic weapons program, is of extreme importance and urgency in the national defense, and should have the best possible technical direction.

I hope that after you have heard more in detail from the Atomic Energy Commission, your organization will find it possible to undertake this task. In my opinion you have here an opportunity to render an exceptional service in the national interest.

I am writing a similar note direct to Dr. O. T. Buckley.

Very sincerely yours,



Mr. Leroy A. Wilson,
President,
American Telephone and Telegraph Company,
195 Broadway,
New York 7, N. Y.

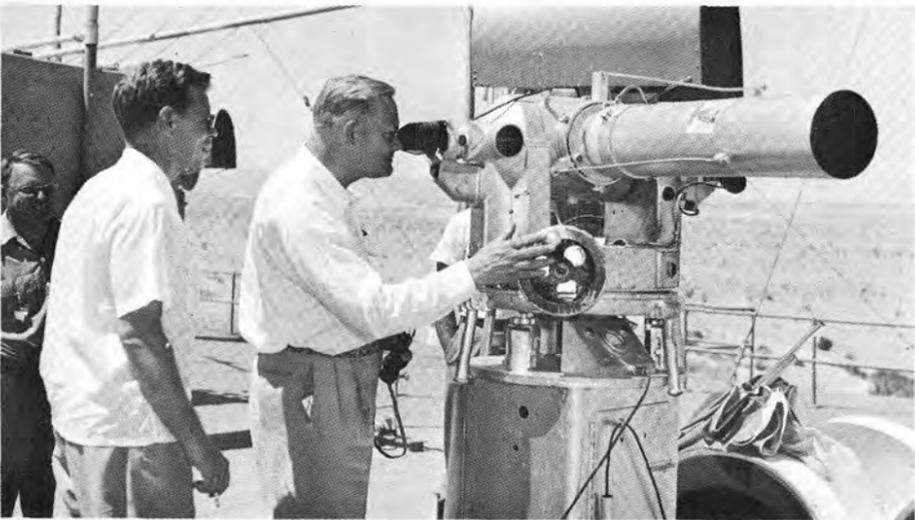
1949, Western Electric and AEC executed a contract calling for WE's operation of Sandia; Western would assume control on Nov. 1. It was at this time that the name "Sandia Corporation" first appeared.

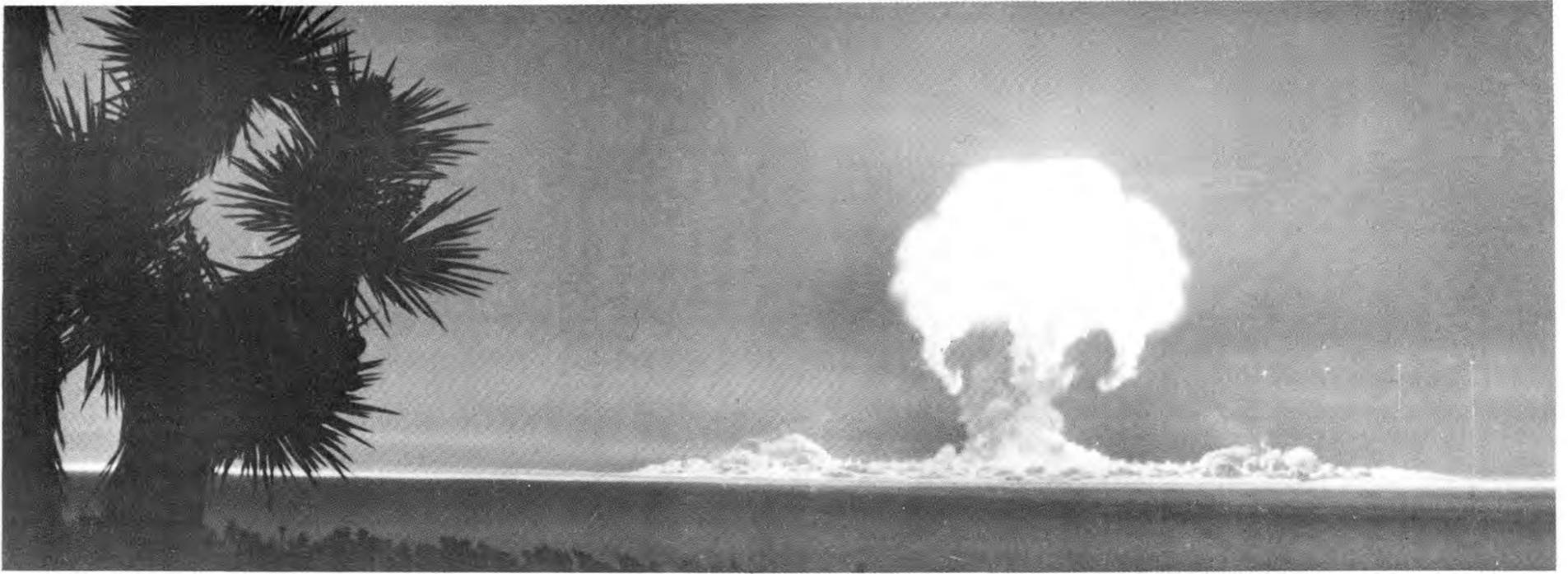
On the occasion of this 25th anniversary, LAB NEWS asked Bell-man Morgan Sparks for his observations on the Sandia-Bell association. "It's been an education for both parties. Speaking for both Bell and Sandia, I'd say we have a good marriage. The silver anniversary is behind us now — shall we look forward to the golden?" • js

THE EARLY YEARS (clockwise from top) — Testing in the Pacific and Nevada dominated Labs activities in the late '40s and early '50s. Operation Greenhouse ('51) people gathered for this group photo in the C-Club; Trinity veterans Lou Jacot (ret'd.) and Jerry Jercinovic (9540) revisit CP for the historic shot 10 years later; guard towers around Tech Area were part of tight security ('51); young lady displays vintage '48 headline; C-Club dances were pretty sedate in '54; three swimmers at the C-Club pool in '51; LAB NEWS gave a full page to the wedding of George Horne (2634) and Pat Bennett ('52); at Salton Sea Sandia President McRae watches as WE's Fred Kappel peers through tracking camera ('55).



The Early Years





THE EARLY YEARS (clockwise from top) — There was a fierce beauty in nuclear shots, in the '50s it was possible for Sandians not working at NTS to view a shot by taking vacation and reporting to the Test Site; microbarograph station on Pacific atoll was one of many manned by Sandians; VP Max Howarth opens '55 softball season; if you liked heat and sand, Salton Sea was hard to beat — that looks like Ben Benjamin (1123) standing by while the crew bends to the task; even in the '50s LAB NEWS was pushing car pools; President Quarles predicts labs growth for New Mexico's Senator Anderson ('53), Sandia's McRae (then President) and LASL's Bradbury (left) flank Gen. Curt LeMay, reigning commander of SAC ('55).

